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Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 DLOS-09 /088 W
----------103116 151108Z /10
R 150836Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1073
INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 4060

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, PLOS, KS, JA
SUBJECT: TOKTO/TAKESHIMA AND OTHER ROK-JAPAN ISSUES

REF: TOKYO 8597

1. TOKTO/TAKESHIMA RAISED ITS HEAD AGAIN LAST WEEK AS AN AFTERMATH OF THE MAY 1 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ROK 12-MILE TERRITORIAL SEA LAW. JAPANESE FISHING WITHIN THE WATERS AROUND THE ISLAND DREW A ROK PROTEST ON MAY 7. THIS IN TURN WAS REJECTED BY JAPAN AND FOREIGN MINISTER SONODA'S COMMENTS ON THE SUBJECT IN THE DIET WERE PROMINENTLY REPORTED IN THE SEOUL PRESS, ALBEIT WITH THE NOTE THAT THE JAPANESE VESSELS HAD BEEN ORDERED BY THEIR OWNERS TO WITHDRAW. THE ISSUE SUBSIDED BRIEFLY THEREAFTER UNTIL MAY 13, WHEN THE SEOUL PRESS QUOTED SONODA AS THREATENING TO SEND PATROL BOATS AND HELICOPTERS TO THE AREA. THIS STORY RECEIVED FRONT PAGE COVERAGE, AND DREW A PREDICTABLE COMMENT FROM THE OPPOSITION NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY THAT ANY SUCH ACTION WOULD BE "FLAGRANT" AND "INTOLBERABLE".

2. THE ISSUE WAS PARTLY DEFUSED BY THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S STATEMENT, CARRIED THGETHER WITH THE SONODA STORY, THAT
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IT HAD RECEIVED AN OFFICIAL DENIAL FROM THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT OF ANY INTENT TO SEND CRAFT TO THE AREA, TOGETHER WITH THE EXPLANATION THAT SONODA'S COMMENT WAS IN REPLY TO A HYPOTHETICAL QUESTION REGARDING THE OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO PROTECT JAPANESE FISHING BOATS IN THE AREA. MOFA'S JAPAN DIVISION DIRECTOR TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER MAY 15 THAT THE ROK PLANS TO REFRAIN FROM PATROLLING

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THE AREA FOR THE TIME BEING AND HOPES THAT THE JAPANESE, IN TURN, WILL KEEP THEIR FISHING BOATS AWAY FROM THE ISLAND. MOFA THEREFORE HOPES THAT THE ISSUE WILL REMAIN QUITE FOR THE TIME BEING.

3. AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN KEEPING THE ISSUE FROM ASSUMING LARGERPROPORTIONS WAS THE CONCURRENT LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY DECISION TO PRESS FOR A DIET EXTENSION TO FACILITATE PASSAGE OF THE CONTINENTAL SHELF BILL. THIS STORY APPEARED IN THE SEOUL VERNACULAR PRESS SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH THE REPORT OF THE SONODA STATEMENT, AND PARTLY OVERSHADOWED IT. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, THE ROKG IS TAKING A FAIRLY RELAXED VIEW OF JSP CHAIRMAN ASUKATA TO NORTH KOREA. THE LATTER VISIT WAS A MATTER OF SOME DISAPPOINTMENT TO THE KOREANS, SOME OF WHOM HAD HOPED ASUKATAMIGHT LET HIS DEPUTY GO TO PYONGYANG INSTEAD. HOWEVER, THE CONTINENTAL SHELF LEGISLATION, AND WHAT OUR MOFA SOURCE PRECIEVES AS A GENERAL TREND TO THE RIGHT IN JAPANESE POLITICS, WEIGH MORE HEAVILY IN THE KOREAN MIND AND MOFA, AS A RESULT IS EVINCING A FARILY OPTIMISTIC VIEW ON ROK-JAPAN RELATIONS.
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Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
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ISecure: 1
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Litigation History:
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SAS ID: 2688303
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